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RECORDS MANAGEMENT SURVEY
COVERT ACTION STAFF

1. Purpose. To conduct a survey of the Records Management Program and to prepare Records Control and Vital Materials Deposit Schedules in the Covert Action Staff of DDP.

2. Background. At the request of [] Chief of Support, an audit of the Records Management program was conducted by [] of the CA Staff, and [] of the Management Staff. The audit consisted of the following:

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a. A survey which included compiling an inventory of the records holdings in the CA Staff and obtaining information from responsible officials as to the use and value of each category of its records. From these facts, the analysts prepared records control schedules--master plans for the retention, retirement and disposition of Staff records. These plans were discussed with, and concurred in, by the component chiefs.

b. In addition, Vital Materials Deposit Schedules, in accordance with [] were approved by the Chief of Support, the DDP Records Management Officer, and the Chief of the Management Staff. The Covert Action Staff Vital Materials Deposit Schedule was forwarded to the Vital Materials Repository on 21 April 1960.

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3. Findings.

a. The Records Control Schedule indicates that the records holdings of the Staff total 779 cubic feet, categorized into 153 separate record series. Of these 153 individual record series, 29 or 19% have been identified as "Permanent", and 124 or 81% as "Temporary."

Note: For the purpose of this Records Control Schedule, the terms "Permanent" and "Clandestine Services Records Materials" are synonymous as are "Temporary" and "Auxiliary Paper Holdings."

When the term "Temporary (Auxiliary Paper Holdings)" is used, it indicates that the record copy is held elsewhere, or that the content of the records series is not of sufficient value to be classified as a permanent record.

b. The Agency-approved Subject-Numeric file system was found in only two components. However, each file had been discontinued, having been superseded by a chrono type file.

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c. Many records were being retained beyond their usefulness because personnel were not aware that legal authority existed for destruction or that an office of record had been established elsewhere.

d. There was an unnecessary amount of reference material caused by the failure of Staff personnel to screen the collections at regular intervals to withdraw or destroy material which had been revised, superseded, or no longer needed.

e. Staff personnel were unaware of the services available in the [redacted] and at the Agency Records Center.

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f. A comparison of the total records holdings compiled during this survey, 779 cubic feet, with the 1,564 cubic feet shown in the Staff's annual report of 10 August 1959, indicates a reduction of 785 cubic feet.

This is significant and reflects the progress [redacted] has made on the Records Disposition Program. To accomplish this reduction, she employed the following techniques:

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(1) Revised files to eliminate superfluous filing guides and file folders.

(2) Substituted lighter, space-saving kraft folders for the heavier and more expensive pressboard folders.

(3) Conducted a general "house-cleaning" of reference materials no longer needed.

(4) Withdrew from the files and destroyed extraneous materials; i.e., duplicates, routing sheets, copies of Form 238, etc.

(5) Retired inactive records to less expensive storage at the Records Center.

g. A review of the Covert Action Staff Vital Materials deposits at the Repository indicated that 80% were either non-current or no longer considered vital to the CA Staff.

4. Recommendations.

a. That the Records Control Schedule be applied immediately.

(1) Application of the CA Staff Records Schedule will preserve not only the records considered of permanent value to the Staff but also those of lasting value and interest to the Clandestine Services.

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(2) Adherence to this schedule will provide an efficient and economical records disposition program within the Staff which will result not only in substantial savings, but also in more advantageous use of office space and equipment.

(3) The orderly maintenance and control of Covert Action Staff records through the Records Control Schedule will increase the efficiency of your Staff components.

(4) The CA Staff Records Schedule should be used by administrators and by the Records Management Officer as an administrative control in complying with approved Agency and Clandestine Services policies and procedures.

b. That the Records Control Schedule be kept under constant review.

(1) The Record categories defined in the attached schedule reflect the current functions of each Staff unit. As these functions change, the Records Control Schedule should be revised to reflect the change in responsibilities. Proper documentation should be entered on the schedule to reflect all actions (additions or deletions) which will occur subsequent to the implementation of the schedule.

(2) The CA Staff Records Control Schedule should be reviewed annually by the CA Staff Records Management Officer.

c. That the Covert Action Staff Vital Materials Deposit Schedule be implemented immediately.

(1) The VM Deposit Schedule identifies all materials needed by the Covert Action Staff to carry out its emergency wartime operations as defined in [] The media used in transferring these records to the Agency Repository, the frequency of deposit, and the period of time these records should remain in the VMR are clearly defined.

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(2) Based on the assumption that during nuclear war all records at Headquarters will be destroyed, it is imperative that materials considered vital be transferred without delay to the Repository.

d. That the CA Vital Materials Deposit Schedule be kept current.

Changes in the war-time mission of any subordinate components, or changes in the world situation, will require the immediate amending of the attached VM Schedule. In addition, this schedule should be reviewed annually, and if necessary, be revised and re-submitted by the CA Staff RM₀ for approval.

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e. That greater use be made of the K Building Library.

Agency branch libraries were established to render convenient reference services commensurate with the particular needs of the occupants of the buildings in which libraries are located. Use of the facilities available in the K Building library will reduce the volume of reference materials needed by your Staff.

f. That the Agency Subject-Numeric File system be installed in all components of your Staff.

A review of the various file systems indicated that many of your offices do not maintain subject files and are relying completely on chronological (convenience) files. After a year or so, a chrono file loses its effectiveness. Also, in itself, a chronological file is an incomplete record as it contains only copies of correspondence generated within the particular office area. As it fails to provide for the attachment and/or ready reference to previous incoming and outgoing correspondence, it fails as a tool in the preparation of complete and accurate replies. However, the Agency-approved filing system will provide uniformity, easy filing, quick reference, and prompt retrievability of material previously filed, making it particularly adaptable to conditions resulting from personnel rotations between Headquarters and the field.

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